INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD RELIGION

LESSON 1

I. GODDESS RELIGIONS IN THE OLD WORLD

A. Gravettian-Aurignacian Cultures (25000 BC-15000 BC)

1. The Upper-Paleolithic period, though most of its sites have been found in Europe, is the conjectural foundation of the religion of the Goddess as it emerged in the later Neolithic Age of the Near East.

a. There have been numerous studies of Paleolithic cultures, explorations of sites occupied by these people, and the apparent rites connected with the disposal of their dead.

b. In these Upper-Paleolithic societies, the concept of the creator of all human life may have been formulated by the clan's image of women, who were their most ancient primal ancestors.

(1) It is believed that the mother was regarded as the sole parent of children in this culture.

(2) Ancestor worship appears to have been the basis of sacred rituals and ancestry is believed to have been reckoned through the matriline.

(a) The beginnings of Roman religion were based on survivals of the Etruscan culture and ancestor worship was the earliest form of religion in Rome.

(b) Even today, the Jewish people determine who is and is not a Jew through the matriline.

2. The most tangible evidence supporting the theory that these cultures worshipped a Goddess is the numerous sculptures of women found throughout most of Europe and the Near East. Some of these sculptures date as far back as 25,000 BC.

a. These small female figurines, made of stone, bone, and clay, most of which are seemingly pregnant, have been found throughout the widespread Gravettian-Aurignacian sites in areas as far apart as Spain, France, Germany, Austria, and Russia.

(1) These sites and figurines appear to span a period of at least 10,000 years.

3. Johannes Maringer, in his book 'The Gods of Prehistoric Man' says- "It appears highly probable then that the female figurines were idols of a Great Mother cult, practiced by the non-nomadic Aurignacian mammoth hunters who inhabited the immense Eurasian territories that extended from Southern France to Lake Baikal in

Siberia."

a. It was from this Lake Baikal area in Siberia that tribes are believed to have migrated across a great land bridge to North America about this time period, and formed the nucleus of what was to become the race of American Indians.

(1) This tends to support the observation that European witchcraft and American Indian shamanism have similar roots.

B. The Roots of Western Civilization

1. Western Civilization began in Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley, where it traveled into Palestine and Greece.

a. From Greece civilization traveled to Rome,and as the Roman Empire grew it spread to Spain, France, Germany and England.

2. Mesopotamia (3500 BC - 539 BC)

a. Mesopotamia ("the land between the rivers") is the name used to describe the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the southern area of which is mostly lowlying swampland and marshes.

(1) The fertile lands of Mesopotamia lie between the desert and the mountains. The northern part has regular rainfall while the southern part, stretching down to the Arabian Gulf, suffers dry scorching summers from May to October.

(a) In what is now the southern part of Iraq, Sumer existed as one of the world's first civilizations.

b. Between 2800 and 2400 BC the city-states of Sumer were at their strongest and wealthiest.

(1) The Goddess was worshipped under various names which were epithets, or characterizing phrases, such as 'Queen of Heaven' and 'Lady of the High Places'. The name of the city or town that She was the patroness for, was often attached to Her title making Her name even more specific.

(a) An example of this is the temple erected about 3000 BC in the city-state of Uruk which was dedicated to the Queen of Heaven of Erech.

(b) This city was made a major power and rival to its sister city Ur by Gilgamesh's son.

c. About 2350 BC an ambitious king, named Sargon, attacked Sumer, and made it part of his huge Empire. His capitol of Agade gave us the name by which Sargons empire is known- the Akkadian Empire.

(1) The Akkadian Empire was the first successful attempt to

unite a huge area under the rule of one man. It eventually gained supremacy in about 1900 BC and gradually superseded the Summerians as the cultural and political leaders of the region.

(a) The Akkadian language of the Babylonians became the international language of the Near East, just as French would become the language of diplomacy thousands of years later.

(b) The new Babylonian culture incorporated the Sumerian religion, and the Sumerian language was adopted as the language of the liturgy much as Latin is used as the language of liturgy for Roman Catholics.

(c) The sumerian Goddess, under the names Inanna, Eriskegan and Irnini, evolved into the great Babylonian Goddess Ishtar.

d. Approximately 1600 BC Babylon was sacked by an Indo-European people known as the Hittites who came from Anatolia, off to the northwest.

(1) During the confusion that ensued, the Kassites seized the throne of Babylon and ruled peacefully for 400 years.

(a) Ishtar's power waned as the Babylonians were influenced by the warlike Hittites and Her temples were taken over by a male-dominated priesthood, which called the Goddess Tiamat and wrote stories of how their god Marduk had killed Her in the struggle for control of the region.

e. In the centuries following 1103 BC the Assyrians rose to power and expanded into most of Mesopotamia from their homeland which lay between the cities of Asher and Nineveh on the Tigrus River.

(1) In the eighth century, the Assyrians conquered most of Syria, Palestine, Phoenicia and had invaded Egypt as far as Thebes (Luxor) before the Egyptians drove them back.

(a) Looking to legitimize their new empire, they 'married' their god Asher to Ishtar, whose followers had secretly kept Her worship alive.

(b) The joining of Ashur with Ishtar produced a son named Ninurta, and this is the first formally recorded triad of Goddess, Consort, and Divine Child in the Near East.

(2) From 631 to 539 BC much inter-city warfare occurred as the Assyrian empire fell apart.

(a) In 539 BC Nabonius, the last king of Babylonia, surrendered to Cyrus II of Persia who was busy building

the greatest empire ever attempted.

3. Anatolia

a. Anatolia, which is also called Asia Minor, is a broad peninsula jutting westward from the Asian continent itself. To the north lies the Black Sea, to the south the easternmost part of the Mediterranean. At the entrance to the Black Sea are the Dardanelles and it is here that Asia comes closest to the continent of Europe. Not surprisingly, Anatolia has always been the main link between the Orient and the Occident.

b. In Neolithic Anatolia (present day Turkey) the Great Goddess was worshiped in the shrines of Catal Huyuk around 6500 BC.

c. Anatolia was invaded sometime before 2000 BC by the Indo-Europeans and a group of them settled in a part of Anatolia known as Hatti. The invaders and local people came to be known collectively as the Hittites.

(1) These are the same Hittites who sacked Babylonia in 1600 BC and suppressed the worship of Ishtar in favor of their god Marduk.

d. Most of the references to the Goddess in the literature and texts of Anatolia alluded to the older Hattian deities despite the fact that the only records allowed to survive were written after the conquest of Anatolia by the Indo-Europeans.

(1) One of the most important female deities to survive was the Sun Goddess Arinna. After the conquest she was assigned a husband who was symbolized as a storm god.

(a) At the time of the Hittite invasions of other lands, many of the people who were Goddess-worshippers may have fled to the west. The renowned temple of the Goddess in the city of Ephesus was the target of the apostle Paul's zealous missionary efforts (Acts 19:27). This temple remained active until 380 AD.

4. Crete

a. The Aegean Sea is an area of the Mediterranean, lying between the mainland of Greece and the western coast of Anatolia. The Aegean Sea is dotted with a great number of mountainous islands and the largest of these is Crete, which is just about 60 miles southeast of Greece.

(1) Crete was the society that is most repeatedly thought to have been matrilineal and possibly matriarchal from Neolithic times to the Dorian invasion.

(a) Reverance of the double headed ax as a symbol of the Mother Goddess and a reverence for the sexual vitality of

bulls were two notable aspects of Crete's early culture.

(b) Bull leaping is thought to have been the origin of Spain's bullfighting, although in Crete the bull was never harmed.

(2) After viewing the artifacts and murals at Knossos, the Archaeological Museum at Iraklion and other museums in Crete, there is little doubt that the principal sacred being on Crete for several millenia was the Goddess and that women acted as Her clergy.

5. Egypt (3100 to 30 BC)

a. Egypt is a hot, desert land divided by the fertile valley of the Nile river. Hardly any rain falls there and the summers are scorching hot. Even today, most of Egypt is arid desert.

(1) The Cultivation, a strip of land on each side of the Nile river, is one of the most fertile stretches of land in the world.

(a) Although the Cultivation is only 12 1/2 miles wide, it runs for about 620 miles from Aswan in the south to the broad farmlands of the delta where the Nile empties into the Mediterranean.

b. In prehistoric Egypt, the Goddess held sway in Upper Egypt (the south) as Nekhebt and She was depicted in the form of a vulture.

(1) The people of Lower Egypt, including the northern delta region, worshipped the Goddess as Ua Zit (Great Serpent) and depictions of Her show Her as a cobra.

c. From about 3000 BC onward the Goddess was said to have existed when nothing else had been created.

(1) She was known as Nut, Net, or Nit which was probably derived from Nekhebt.

(a) According to Egyptian mythology, it was the Goddess who first put Ra, the sun god, in the sky.

(b) Other texts of Egypt tell of the Goddess as Hathor in this role as creatrix of existence, explaining that She took form as a serpent at the time.

d. In Egypt the concept of the Goddess always remained vital. Eventually the Goddess evolved into a more composite Goddess known as Isis.

(1) Isis (Au Set) incorporated the aspects of both Ua Zit and Hathor. Isis was also closely associated with the Goddess as Nut, who was mythologically recorded as Her Mother; in paintings Isis wears the wings of Nekhebt.

(a) Isis was also associated with another triad which included Her husband, Osiris, and their son Horus.

(b) Isis' cult was introduced into Rome and the last temple of Isis was closed in 394 AD by Theodosios.

6. Canaan (8000 - 63 BC)

a. The biblical land of Canaan, the 'land of milk and honey' was an area about 90 miles wide running north and south along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

(1) In modern times the region includes the states of Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and part of Syria. The area made up of Jordan and Israel used to be known as Palestine.

b. Images of the Goddess, some dating back as far as 7000 BC, offer silent testimony to the most ancient worship of the Queen of Heaven in the land that is most often remembered today as the homeland of Judaism and Christianity.

(1) In exploring the influence and importance of the worship of the Goddess in Canaan in biblical times, we find that as Ashtoreth, Asherah, Astarte, Attoret, Anath, or simply as Elat or Baalat, she was the principal deity of such great Canaanite cities as Tyre, Sidon, Ascalon, Beth Anath, Aphaca, Byblos, and Ashtoreth Karnaim.

c. In Egypt, the Hebrews had known the worship of the Goddess as Isis or Hathor. For four generations they had been living in a land where women held a very high status and the matrilineal descent system continued to function at most periods.

(1) Judging from the number of Hebrews who emerged from Egypt in the Exodus, as compared with the family of the the twelve sons who supposedly entered it four generations earlier, it seems likely that a great number of those Hebrews known as Israelites may actually have been Egyptians, Canaanites, Semitic nomads and other Goddess-worshipping peoples who had joined together in Egypt.

d. Archaeological records and artifacts reveal that the religion of the Goddess still flourished in many of the cities of Canaan even after the Hebrews invaded it and claimed it as their own on the authority that their god had given it to them.

(1) And just to the east, all most at their doorstep was Babylon, where the temples of Ishtar were still going strong.

7. Persia (3000 - 331 BC)

a. Throughout its early history Iran was often invaded by nomadic peoples.

(1) Some came through the Elbruz mountains east of the Caspian Sea.

(a) Others, like the Medes and Persians, entered Iran through the Caucasus mountains in the Northwest.

b. By the 9th century BC the most powerful group in Iran was the Medes, who kept the Persians as their servants.

(1) In 612 BC the Medes, together with the Babylonians, captured Nineveh, Ashur, and Kalhu, which were in the heart of the Assyrian empire.

(a) The Assyrian empire collapsed and its vast territories were divided between the Medes and the Babylonians.

c. About 550 BC the king of the Persians led a revolt against the Medes and from that point on the Persians, led by their King Cyrus the Great, ruled over Iran.

(1) Cyrus captured Babylon and gained control of the whole former Babylonian empire.

(a) Virtually all of western Asia was now under Persian rule.

(2) The nest two kings extended Persian rule to Egypt in the south and to the borders of India in the east.

(a) Egypt revolted later and won its independence for a short time, but was forced back into the empire just in time to be part of the prize won by Alexander the Great of Macedonia when he conquered the Persian empire in 331 BC.

I. PEOMAGOGIC HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSAL GODDESS RELIGION

A. Definition of Poemagogic

1. Term coined by Anton Ehrenzweig

a. The special function of inducing and symbolizing the ego's creativity.

(1) It has a dreamlike 'slippery' quality.

(a) One aspect slips into another just like a dream.

B. Legend of the Universal Goddess

1. The craft is a religion which has an unbroken tradition that dates back to Paleolithic times (approximately 35,000 years).

a. As the last ice age retreated the tribe of nomadic hunters worshipped the Goddess of the Wild Things and Fertility and the

God of the Hunt.

(1) Semi-permanent homes were set up in caves carved out by the glaciers.

(a) Shamans and Shamanka conducted rites within hard to reach portions of the caves, which were painted with scenes of the hunt, magical symbols and the tribes totem animals.

2. The transition from Hunter-Gatherers to agriculturists was reflected in the change of the 'Lady of the Wild Things and Fertility' to the 'Barley Mother' and the 'God of the Hunt' to the 'Lord of the Grain'.

a. The importance of the phases of the moon and the sun was reflected in the rituals that evolved around sowing, reaping, and letting out to pasture.

3. Villages grew into towns and cities and society changed from tribal to communal to urban.

a. Paintings on the plastered walls of shrines depicted the Goddess giving birth to the Divine Child - Her son, consort and seed.

(1) The Divine Child was expected to take a special interest in the city dwellers, just as His Mother and Father had taken an interest in the people who lived away from the cities.

b. Mathematics, astronomy, poetry, music, medicine, and the understanding of the workings of the human mind, developed side by side with the lore of the deeper mysteries.

4. Far to the east, nomadic tribes devoted themselves to the arts of war and conquest.

a. Wave after wave of invasion swept over Europe from the Bronze Age onward.

(1) Warrior gods drove the Goddess' people out from the fertile lowlands and the fine temples, into the hills and high mountains, where they became known as the Sidhe, the Picts or Pixies, and the Fair Folk or the Fairies.

b. The mythological cycle of Goddess and Consort, Mother and Child, which had held sway for 30,000 years was changed to conform to the values of the conquering patriarchies.

(1) In Canaan, Yahweh fought a bloody battle to ensure that his followers had "no other gods before me."

(a) The Goddess was given a masculine name and assigned the role of a false god.

(b) Along with the suppression of the Goddess, women lost most of the rights they had previously enjoyed.

(2) In Greece, the Goddess in Her many aspects, was "married" to the new gods resulting in the Olympic Pantheon.

(a) The Titans, who the Olympians displaced were more in touch with the primal aspects of the Goddess.

(3) The victorious Celts in Gaul and the British Isles, adopted many features of the Old Religion and incorporated them into the Druidic Mysteries.

(a) The Faerie, breeding cattle in the stony hills and living in turf-covered round huts preserved the Craft.

(b) They celebrated the eight feasts of the Wheel of the Year with wild processions on horseback, singing and chanting along the way and lighting ritual bonfires on the mountaintops.

(c) It was said that the invaders often joined in the revels and many rural families, along with some royalty, could claim to have Faerie blood.

(d) The College of the Druids and the Poetic Colleges of Ireland and Wales were said to have preserved many of the old mysteries.

5. In the late 1400's the Catholic Church attempted to obliterate its competitors, and the followers of the Old Religion were forced to 'go underground.'

a. They broke up into small groups called Covens and, isolated from each other, formed what would later be known as the Family Traditions.

(1) Inevitably, parts of the Craft were forgotten or lost and what survives today is fragmentary.

6. After nearly five centuries of persecution and terror, came the Age of Disbelief.

a. Memory of the True Craft had faded as non-members who could remember how they once had met openly died and those who came after never knew of them.

(1) All that was left were the hideous stereotypes which were ludicrous, laughable or just plain tragic.

7. With the repeal of the last Witchcraft Act in England in 1954, the Craft started to re-emerge as an alternative to a world that viewed the planet as a resource to be exploited.

III THE ARCHETYPE OF THE GODDESS

A. The Craft has always been a religion of poetry, not theology.

1. The myths, legends, and teachings are recognized as metaphors for 'That which cannot be told'; the absolute reality our minds can never completely express because of the limitations placed on it through biology.

a. The mysteries of the absolute can never be explained - only felt or intuited.

b. Symbols and ritual acts are used to trigger unusual states of awareness in which insights that go beyond words are revealed.

(1) When the phrase 'secrets that cannot be told' is used, it is not a matter of oaths taken or the threat of penalties that might be imposed.

(a) The true meaning is that the inner knowledge literally cannot be expressed in words.

(b) It can only be conveyed by experience and no one can legislate what insight another person may draw from any given experience.

(c) This is why the Craft is not a spectator religion, where you can refuse to put any effort in and gain anything meaningful for your own development.

(d) This is also why entrenched priesthoods foster the belief that non-priests must go through a hierarchy of priests, heads of churches, and eventually through chosen prophets and sons of the deity in order to receive special attention by the deity.

B. The primary symbol for 'that which cannot be told' in the Craft is the Mother Goddess. She has an infinite number of aspects and thousands of names because She is the reality behind many metaphors for the creation of the universe.

1. Unlike patriarchal systems, the Craft sees the Goddess as giving birth to the world rather than creating it out of nothing.

a. The fertile Lands were made from Her Flesh, the Waters from Her own bodily Fluids, the Mountains from Her Bones, and the Winds from Her own Breath.

(1) The Goddess does not rule the world, She IS the world and since She gave birth to us all, we have the potential to reconnect with the spirit of Her in all Her magnificent diversity.

(2) Religion for us, then is a matter of relinking with the

divine within and with Her outer manifestations in all the human and natural world.

(a) One of the basic beliefs that the Craft is founded upon is what Stewart Farrar call the 'Theory of Levels', which recognizes that reality exists and operates on many planes.

(b) A simplified but generally accepted list would be - physical, etherical, astral, mental and spiritual.

(c) It is recognized that each of these levels has its own laws and that these laws, while special to their own levels, are compatible with each other and their mutual resonance governs the interaction between the levels.

(d) The point of this excursion into the esoterica of how the universe works, is to point out that we do not separate our physical existence from our spiritual existence. In the Craft, spirit and flesh are joined together and physical aspects of being human such as sex are not considered 'dirty ' or 'sinful'.

C. The importance of the Craft for women, is a direct outgrowth in the decline of Goddess religions and the rise of God dominated religions.

1. Male images of divinity are characterized in both western and eastern religions today, and women are thus deprived of religious models and spiritual systems that can speak to female needs and experience.

a. In the extremes of male dominated religions, women are not encouraged to explore their own strengths and realizations.

(1) They are taught to submit to male authority, to identify masculine perceptions as their spiritual ideals, to deny their bodies and sexuality, and to fit their insights into a male mold, no matter how ludicrus that may seem.

2. The image of the Goddess inspires women to see themselves in a very different light.

a. As Daughters of the Goddess, they are divine, their bodies are sacred, and the changing phases of their lives are holy.

(1) Their aggression is healthy, and their anger can be purifying.

(a) Their power to create and nurture as well as their ability to limit and to destroy, when necessary, is seen as the very force that sustains all life.

(2) Through the Goddess, women can discover their strengths, enlighten their minds, own their bodies and celebrate their emotions.

(a) They can move beyond narrow constricting roles and become whole people.

3. For women, the Goddess is the symbol of the inmost self and the beneficent, nurturing, liberating power within all women.

a. The cosmos is modelled on the female body, which is sacred.

(1) All phases of life are sacred and age is a blessing, not a curse.

(a) The Goddess does not limit women to their bodies. She awakens their minds and spirits and emotions.

(b) Through Her, they can know the power of anger and aggression, as well as the power of love.

D. The Image of the Goddess has a great deal to offer men as well as women.

1. Men are also oppressed in a God ruled, patriarchal society.

a. Men are encouraged to identify with a model that no human being can possibly live up to.

(1) Men are expected to be mini-rulers of their own very narrow universes.

(a) Men are internally split between a spiritual self, that is supposed to conquer their baser animal instincts, and their emotional selves.

(b) They are at war with themselves. In the west, they are expected to overcome the tendency to sin, while in the east they must suppress the desires of the ego.

(c) Needless to say, no man comes away from this type of struggle undamaged.

2. Every male who is raised by a mother, will from birth carry within him a strong feminine imprint.

a. This is so, because women give birth to males, nurture them at their breast, and in our culture, are primarily responsible for their care until they reach adolescence.

(1) The symbol of the Goddess allows men to experience and integrate the feminine side of their nature without danger of losing those feelings which are the touchstone of their masculinity.

(a) The Goddess becomes: the mother who will never abandon her child: refuse to nurture him when he is feeling his most

vulnerable: tempers her justice with compassion and understanding, all these in ways not always possible in human women and other men.

3. For a man, the Goddess is his own hidden Female self, as well as being the Universal Life force.

a. She embodies all the qualities society teaches him not to recognize in himself.

(1) His first experience with Her may therefore be somewhat stereotypical, in that She appears as the cosmic lover, the gentle nurturer, the eternally desired Other, or the Muse. All that he is not.

(a) As he becomes more whole and becomes aware of his own 'female' qualities, She seems to change, to show him a new face. Always holding up a mirror, She shows what may seem ungraspable to him.

(b) He may chase Her forever and She will elude him, but through the attempt, he will grow until he too learns to find Her within.

IV THE ARCHETYPE OF THE HORNED GOD

A. The Horned God is born of a Virgin Mother

1. He is a model of male power that is free from father-son rivalry or 'Oedipal' conflicts.

a. He has no father, because He is his own father.

(1) As He grows and passes through the changes on the Wheel, He remains in relationship with the prime nurturing force of the Goddess.

(a) His power is drawn directly from the Goddess and He participates in life through Her.

2. The Horned God represents powerful, positive male qualities that derive from deeper sources than the stereotypical violence and emotional crippling of men present in our society.

a. When a man strives to emulate the God, he is free to be wild without being cruel, angry without being violent, sexual without being coercive, spiritual without being unsexed, and able to truly love.

3. For men the God is the image of inner power, and of a potency that is more than merely sexual.

a. He is the undivided Self, in which mind is not split from the body, nor spirit from flesh.

(1) United, both can function at the peak of creative and emotional power.

b. Men are not subservient or relegated to second class spiritual citizenship on the Craft.

(1) But neither are they automatically elevated to a higher status than women, as they are in other religions.

(a) Men in the Craft must interact with strong, empowered women who do not pretend to be anything less than what they are.

(b) Many men find this prospect disconcerting at first.

4. For women raised in our present culture, the God begins as a symbol of all those qualities that have been identified as male, and that they, as women, have not been allowed or encouraged to own.

a. The symbol of the God, like that of the Goddess, is both internal and external.

(1) Through meditation and ritual a woman invokes the God and creates his image within herself.

(a) In this way she connects with those qualities that she may lack.

(2) As her understanding moves beyond culturally imposed limitations her image of the God changes and deepens.

(a) He becomes the Creation, which is not simply a replica of oneself, but something different and of a different order.

(b) True Creation implies separation as the very act of birth is a relinquishment or letting go.

(c) Through the God, women know this power within themselves, and so, like the Goddess, the God can empower women.

5. In the Craft, the cosmos is no longer modeled on external male control.

a. The hierarchy is dissolved and the heavenly chain of command is broken.

(1) The "divinely revealed" texts are seen as poetry not the "word of God."

(a) Instead, a man must connect with the Goddess who is immanent in the world, in nature, in women, and in his own feelings.

(b) She is immanent in everything that childhood religions taught needed to be overcome, transcended, and conquered, in order to be loved by 'God'.

b. The very aspects of the Craft that seem threatening also hold out to men a new and vibrant spiritual possibility: that of wholeness, connection, and freedom.

(1) Men of courage find relationships with strong powerful women exhilarating and they welcome the chance to know the Female within the self.

(a) They enjoy the chance to grow beyond their culturally imposed limitations and become whole.

c. Within Covens, women and men can experience group support and the affection of other women and men.

(1) They can interact in situations that are not competitive or antagonistic.

(a) Men in Covens can become true friends with other men, without giving up any part of themselves, or subjecting themselves to derision or ridicule.

V. ETHICS AND VALUES SHARED BY MOST MEMBERS OF THE CRAFT

A. The ethics of the Craft are more positive than negative.

1. Rather than being exhorted with a plethora of "thou shall nots" the Craft is guided by principles more along the lines of "blessed be they who...."

a. The Craft is a joyous creed; it is also a socially and ecologically responsible one. Witches delight in the world and their involvement in it on all levels.

(1) They enjoy their minds, their psyches, their bodies, their senses and sensitivities; and they delight in relating, on all these planes, with their fellow creatures and the Earth Herself.

2. Wiccans believe in a joyful balance of all human functions.

a. This outlook is perfectly expressed in the Charge of the Goddess, which is an integral part of most of the rituals of all witches.

(1) "Let My worship be within the heart that rejoices; for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals, and therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you."

(a) This provides a model of a balanced ethic which presents eight qualities that are positive and not restrictive.

(b) Compassion means empathy, not condescension; humility means a realistic appraisal of your own stage of development; reverence means a sense of wonder.

(c) The Wiccan is always conscious that compassion must be partnered with power, humility with honor, and reverence with mirth.

3. Love of life in all its forms, is the basic ethic of the Craft.

a. We are bound to honor and respect all living things and to serve the Life Force.

(1) It has been said that we all serve the Goddess, even if only as compost.

4. Witchcraft recognizes that life feeds on life.

a. We must kill in order to survive, but life is never taken needlessly, never squandered or wasted.

(1) To ensure the survival of the species, females are not hunted as game, for they share the sacred bond of motherhood with the Goddess.

(a) Serving the Life Force also means working to preserve the diversity of natural life, preventing the poisoning of the environment and the destruction of species.

5. The World is seen as the manifestation of the Goddess

a. What happens in the World is important because the Goddess is directly affected.

(1) While the seasons of the year renew the Goddess, She needs the participation of Her creations to keep the cycle going.

(a) This is the real function of the Sabbats. They reinforce the ties between humankind and the Planet that gives us life.

(b) Unlike other gods, that allow humanity to exist at their sufferance, the Goddess needs us just as much as we need Her, and we are partners in the pageant of Life.

6. Justice is seen as an inner sense that each act brings about consequences that must be faced responsibly.

a. This is based on the belief that all things are interdependent and interrelated.

(1) Therefore, we are all mutually responsible because an act that harms anyone harms us all.

(a) This is summed up in the form of a law known as Karma, which dictates that all actions bring about changes.

(2) There is a saying in the Craft that illustrates the effects of Karma known as the 'Threefold Law of Return'

(a) 'Whatever is sent out is returned three times over.'

(b) It is a sort of amplified 'Golden Rule'

7. Honor is a guiding principle of the Craft.

a. It is an inner sense of pride and self respect

(1) Refusing to do anything which would make you ashamed of yourself strengthens your magical will and leads to the self respect that comes from setting your own course, guided by your own inner sense of right or wrong.

(a) This makes you rightfully proud of past accomplishments and encourages you to stay the course.

b. The Goddess is honored in oneself and in others.

(1) Women are respected and valued for all their human qualities.

(a) The Self, one's individuality and unique way of being, is highly valued.

(2) Like Nature, the Goddess loves diversity.

(a) Oneness is attained not through losing the Self, but through realizing the Self's potential.

8. Self development and the full realizatin of one's unique yet many aspected potential is a moral duty for a witch.

a. Life is seen as a gift from the Goddess and it is up to us to push the evolution to mankin

(1) If suffering exists, it is not our task to reconcile ourselves to it.

(a) We must work for change in all ways at hand.

b. That which helps this evolution to come about is seen as good and desirable while actions that thwart it are to be avoided because each of us is a factor in the cosmic evolutionary process.

END OF LESSON 1